



THE EVENING WORLD'S COMPLETE NOVELETTE.

THE FORTUNE HUNTRESS

By Bernice Brown • Illustrated by Will B. Johnstone.



WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY.

JULIE PARKER, tired of the monotony of poverty and the small town and determined to marry a rich man.

JUDGE RICHARD HOWELLS, leading lawyer of the small town and Julie's employer.

DON MATTHEWS, recent law school product, in love with Julie.

STEPHEN WINTHROP, a New York lawyer, a classmate of Judge Howells.



It was 5 o'clock where Silas Parker sat engulfed in a day-old Chicago paper, to the bed-room she shared with her sister, Gertrude, coming her hair, screwed around, brush in hand, and smiled at Julie.

"Would you mind if I wore your new blouse this evening? You know," she explained, "we didn't get any laundry done this week."

Julie frowned and hung up her jacket. "Oh, I suppose not. Who are you going out with?"

Gertrude resumed her brushing. "Harry."

"Well, I hope he thinks it becoming." Her tone was not cordial.

Gertrude remained unruffled. "Don't be touchy, old dear. You've got all the looks. I ought to get the blouse. Law of compensation."

"Nonsense! There's no compensation in this family." Julie put on her last year's serge and went down the back stairs to the kitchen.

Mrs. Parker glanced up as she entered and smiled. "Hello, Julie! We'll have to do the roast on the top of the stove. The oven's temperamental again."

Julie looked hard at her mother. Mrs. Parker might have been pretty twenty years ago. She would be nice looking now, Julie thought, if she would only take a little time to it.

A faint smell of coal gas permeated the room and Julie sniffed scornfully. "I bet we're the only family in North America that still uses a coal range," she protested.

Mrs. Parker basted the roast with a long spoon. "I don't mind it. This stove's all right except when the wind's in the north." She maneuvered the cover of the roaster back into place. "Julie, don't set the table. There'll be six of us, Bob's bringing his home."

In the pantry Julie selected at random from the heterogeneous Parker collection. There had been a time when, if the number of guests did not exceed five, she could find enough plates that matched. "Nobody cares but me," she thought bitterly.

Mr. Parker strolled out into the kitchen and stood, his legs apart, staring at the building kettles. "I could eat a barn door," he complained at last.

Mrs. Parker smiled up at him. "Well, you wouldn't like it. Si, the potatoes are ready. You might carry them into the dining room."

The Parker dinners were never replete. There ensued at each meal a great deal of wrangling, generally good natured, as to who should refill the water glasses or go out for more butter. The Parkers seldom attempted to serve dinner in courses.

AFTER a tray had been carried up to Cally, who had a bad cold, and the dishes were washed, the house became quiet. All the children except Julie had gone to the movies, and Mr. Parker had returned to the store. By the living room drop-light Mrs. Parker was whipping a shirt band on her husband's Sunday garment. She always hummed when she mended.

For a long time Julie watched her. "Don't you ever get sick of that?" she asked finally.

Mrs. Parker looked up and smiled. "Well, this one was pretty well gone," she said. "Sometimes they don't need more than a stitch."

Julie's voice was hard with annoyance. "Oh, I don't mind that shirt. I mean all shirts—and being poor, and never having any leisure, or comfort, or beauty. Nobody's ever grateful to you, you know, for slaving for them."

Mrs. Parker went on with her whipping. "No, I don't think I mind this because I happen to be fond of Silas Parker and his children." There was another silence while the clock ticked noisily. "Julie, you better marry rich."

Julie cast a sidelong glance at her mother, but Mrs. Parker's expression appeared guiltless. "Why?"

"Well, there's a Heinie Gutstadt. She chuckled. "He's the richest man in Benton."

"Heaven's mother, even as a joke!" Reproach filled her voice. "I want some one with background and taste and culture."

THE Parkers lived on the corner in a brown frame house that always looked as though it needed painting. Lights gleamed from the windows, and Julie noted that the blinds, undrawn, all hung at uneven lengths.

Julie slipped past the living room under her gray toque, slipped on her jacket and fastened the cheap squirrel fur piece at the one correct angle.

Then Don Matthews pushed open the door from the outer office. In his sagging Norfolk jacket he looked shabby and likeable and boyish. He earned, perhaps, \$10 a week more than she did. In fifteen years he might achieve a reasonable competence. Fifteen years!

"Julie," he began. With a sort of wistful furtiveness she avoided him. "Don't, Don," she whispered. "Please don't say anything this evening. I—I'm really in a hurry and my head hurts." Her clumsiness exasperated her. She intended to be kind; to evade him, not to wound him. "I've got to help mamma to-night. Cally's sick, and, of course, we haven't got any girl. We never do have, and it doesn't make any difference to mamma how many people blow in for dinner. Bob's always bringing people home and pa and Gertrude. It's—the limit." The bitterness of her resentment overshadowed even her consciousness of Don Matthews. "I suppose I'm horrid to blow up like this, but sometimes it just seems as though I couldn't stand it the way the house is messed up all the time, and we never have money enough to buy anything for it, and everybody wears made-over clothes and goes to bargain sales and—"

Don Matthews leaned against the grizzled volumes and smiled down at her. "Gosh, but you wring the heart," he jeered. "You've got one of the nicest, dearest families in the country, and you know it."

Julie Parker shrugged her shoulders with annoyance. "Oh, as individuals I've nothing against them. They're wonders, good-natured and clever and—alike. They don't seem to care that we'll never have a red cent and be able to live easily or beautifully. They just take things for granted. I don't. I—"

"You're tired, Julie," he soothed. "A big family in a small house does get a bit thick. I know. Never even had a bureau drawer I could call my own until I went to college. I jammed his hands deeper into the pockets of his jacket. "But there's something in being sort of fond of the people that push you down stairs." For a long moment they looked at each other, and the girl's eyes widened. "I reckon I didn't choose a very opportune moment to ask you to share the horrors of a struggling lawyer's establishment," he went on.

"I've got darn little to offer you, but I care about you, Julie—" "Please, Don," she pleaded, "to-morrow or the next day. I like you, you know that, I—"

Mrs. Parker smiled again. "That sounds like a fairly attractive inventory. Here's wishing you luck, dearie."

"Then she repented of her humor. 'Julie, don't, you're tired. Better get to sleep before Gertrude comes in. It does take her such a long time to undress.'"

But Julie was awake long after her mother had crawled into the protesting bed beside her. She lay very still, pretending she slept.

First she thought of Don Matthews—marriage with Don would be impossible, at least for years. She was twenty-four and pretty, but there was no one in Benton she could marry. No one. She would not repeat the valiant, stupid, uncompensating sacrifice her mother had made. She would

that. But he hated to have her go. "Golly, Julie, New York's a big village." He was more stirred than he cared to admit. "Still, I reckon you'll learn to find your way around."

Julie's departure assumed the dimensions of a ceremony. Everybody did for her all the thoughtful, tender, commonplace services that knit together the separate members of a family into an indissoluble unit. The whole family helped pack her trunk and its cheap, varnished lid closed down on some particular treasure cherished by each one of them. How loyal they were, and how pitiful! They would give her all they had, but they could not give her contentment.

NEW YORK! Julie was confused and stimulated and depressed in a constantly interlocking series of moods.

She had a room in the West Seven-

hand. "I'm glad you're here. Good-night, Miss Parker."

In a month Julie had adapted herself to the new routine, but she found it in the end scarcely less monotonous than her old position with Judge Howells. Then Winthrop's secretary left and the efficient office manager transferred Julie temporarily to fill the vacancy. Winthrop was surprised on arriving at the office next morning, to find her in his sanctum, and the quick look of pleasure on his face did not escape her.

"You won't like me as well as Dick Howells," he said abruptly. But I'll promise never to keep you after hours. He did, didn't he?"

She laughed. "Oh, not often. I don't think he ever considered me amiable enough to impose on. I'm not like the rest of my family."

Winthrop's eyes glowed as he watched her. He was glad he could give her the things that obviously brought her so much satisfaction. Her new gown was charming. She had become very lovely, though her cheeks did not possess the same delicate health she had brought to New York. If he missed the intimacy and comradeship he had pictured to himself, he did

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He looked at her quickly. "That sounds serious. What's the matter, Mrs. Winthrop?"

She waited a long minute before she answered. "Maybe, just being Mrs. Winthrop. Stephen, I haven't enough to do."

"No?" He took her hand and smoothed it gently. "I thought maybe you'd earned some leisure."

"Earned?" She laughed, a little bitterly. "My mother earned it, but did she get it? The things you don't deserve. What's the matter with the system?"

"Ask me something easy, Sweetheart. For instance, do I have to dress for dinner?"

"Tired?"

He nodded, but she did not need this confirmation. "Stephen, you need a tonic."

A week Winthrop suspected it might be more than a tonic he needed. He had a queer pain in his eyes and back of his neck. Much as he hated to spare the time from his office, he consulted his doctor.

Dr. James Spaulding took a long hour to the examination, but his diagnosis was short. "You've worked yourself," he said, "to the edge of the precipice."

"Don't be so lyrical," Winthrop thundered.

"All right," he answered. "If you weren't so grossly successful, I'd tell you to throw over your job and go to work on a farm. Not a big one—forty acres. Spray the potato bugs, hoe the peaches, mend the gasoline pump. You know."

Winthrop shuddered. "Sounds attractive."

"It is. Look here, I know just the place for you—friends of mine who want to sublet for the summer."

James Spaulding eyed him squarely. "Well, that pain's pretty stiff, isn't it?"

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"You'll decide now," said Dr. Spaulding, "or you can go to another doctor. You'll never discuss business or your symptoms, even with your wife. Don't give your office a forwarding address. You're to stay a farmer until I tell you you're well. Clear?"

He looked up at him, a little startled. "Why shouldn't I be? I have everything. I don't ever have to worry about what's to become of me." She stopped suddenly. This was cold comfort to give a man who loved her. She slipped her hand into his. "You've been awfully good to me, Stephen."

She had no way of knowing Stephen Winthrop's heart turned to lead.

Eventually Julie completed the alterations in her husband's apartment, and she discovered herself the possessor of long hours of leisure. She read a great deal, walked and visited the art galleries and museums which to Julie Parker of Benton had been only names. As the days passed she grew thinner and the color left her cheeks. She wondered dully what could be wrong. Was she not living her life as she had planned? Wasn't she happy?

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